

# Lawmakers scramble to reach deal ahead of shutdown

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The state Legislative Building in Olympia is shown in this file photo. State employees who received warnings they might be laid off starting July 1 aren't just waiting to see if the state government partially shuts down. They're planning for it. STEVE BLOOM — Staff file [Buy Photo](#)

OLYMPIA, Wash. — In order to avoid a third special session — and a potential partial government shutdown next week — lawmakers are trying to reach agreement and pass a two-year state budget before the current session ends Saturday night.

Senate Republicans' key budget writer, Sen. Andy Hill, announced he'd have a public hearing Thursday afternoon on both a new Senate budget proposal and an emergency plan that would enable the state to keep running an extra month in case lawmakers are unable to pass a new two-year budget by the end of the current fiscal cycle early next week.

The plan, which Hill called a "break glass" emergency option, would fund state government at the current level through the month of July.

"We don't think we'll need to use it. We don't want to use it," he said. "It's one of those things where you always want to have a contingency."

On Monday, House Democrats released their latest budget proposal, a plan that doesn't include any new taxes but looks for about \$350 million in additional revenue through closing or limiting several tax exemptions, a compromise that had been encouraged by Democratic Gov. Jay Inslee. And late Wednesday, Hill introduced a bill looking to close two exemptions that would bring the state an additional \$125 million over the next two years.

The Democratic-controlled House and Republican-controlled Senate have been locked in budget negotiations that have driven them into a second overtime legislative session. If they haven't passed a budget by midnight Saturday, the governor is certain to call them back for a third special session to finish work on a two-year operating budget that is expected to be about \$38 billion.

A new two-year budget must be signed into law by midnight June 30 or else dozens of state agencies and other offices would completely or partially close and more than 26,000 workers would be furloughed, according to the state Office of Financial Management. Most workers received notice this week that they would be temporarily laid off starting July 1 if a budget isn't adopted in time.

While Washington state has never had a government shutdown, the Legislature has taken its budget talks to the brink before. Two years ago, lawmakers didn't reach an agreement on a plan until June 27 and passed it out of both chambers the next day. Inslee signed that budget on June 30.

Read more here: <http://www.thenewstribune.com/2015/06/25/3857063/lawmakers-scramble-to-reach-deal.html#storylink=cpy>